



FAQs for Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities

Q: What are the visitation restrictions for nursing homes and assisted living facilities?

A: DHEC has issued guidance on the visitation restrictions, available [here](#). The restrictions apply to nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The restrictions mean no visitors for patients or residents are allowed to enter a facility except for end-of-life situations. End-of-life situations include patients receiving hospice, palliative, or compassionate care. End-of-life situations should be considered on a case-by-case basis with careful screening of visitors (including clergy, bereavement counselors, etc.) for fever or respiratory symptoms. **Those with fever or symptoms of a respiratory infection (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat) should not be permitted to enter the facility at any time, even in end-of-life situations.** Visitors permitted to enter the facility must wear a face mask while in the building and restrict their visit to the resident's room or other location designated by the facility. DHEC recommends nursing homes and assisted living facilities notify permitted visitors to perform hand hygiene and use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as face masks, throughout the entirety of their visit at the facility.

Q: Who is not considered a visitor and should have access at nursing homes and assisted living facilities?

A: Other than permitted visitors of patients in end-of-life situations, the following are allowed access to facilities:

- **Health Care Workers.** Facilities should follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance regarding access to health care workers, available [here](#). Facilities should also refer to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) guidelines, available [here](#). This applies to health care workers including but not limited to: hospice workers, home health workers, EMS personnel, or other health care providers that provide necessary care to residents. These workers should be permitted to enter the facility as long as they meet CDC and CMS guidelines for health care workers.
- **Inspectors and Surveyors authorized under state and federal law.**
- **Ombudsman.** Residents still have the right to access the Ombudsman program. If in-person access is not available due to infection control concerns, facilities shall facilitate resident communication by phone or other formats with the Ombudsman program.
- **Vendors, Suppliers, and Transportation Providers.** Facilities should review their interactions with vendors furnishing goods or supplies, transportation providers (e.g., when taking residents to offsite appointments, etc.), and all other delivery services (e.g., food delivery) and take necessary actions to prevent any potential transmission. For example, facilities may direct deliveries to an external location (e.g., loading dock) instead of allowing vendor personnel into the building to drop off supplies. Have them dropped off at a dedicated location. Facilities may allow entry of these service providers, if needed, as long as the service providers are following the appropriate CDC guidelines for Transmission-Based Precautions available [here](#).



Q: Are nursing homes and assisted living facilities permitted to admit new patients or residents?

A: As of March 20, 2020, there are no restrictions on admitting new patients or residents. CDC recommends actively monitoring all patients and residents upon admission and daily monitoring for fever and respiratory symptoms, including shortness of breath, new or changing coughs, and sore throat. Monitoring should last fourteen (14) days. If possible, facilities should dedicate a unit or wing exclusively for any patients or residents coming or returning from the hospital, including new patients or residents.

Q: How do nursing homes and assisted living facilities get infection control and PPE supplies?

A: Facilities should request assistance through their local healthcare coalition, or contact their County Emergency Management Division to submit a resource request.

Q: Have there been any changes to the requirements for tuberculosis screening in nursing homes and assisted living facilities?

A: Yes for nursing homes only. Per the [March 19, 2020 memo](#) to nursing homes regarding tuberculosis screenings, the changes only apply for patients admitted from a hospital to the nursing home. There have been no changes to staff tuberculosis screening requirements at nursing homes or assisted living facilities. There have also been no changes to assisted living facility resident tuberculosis screening requirements.